

one hundred pounds for each share—a sum so ambitious that no more came of this 'scheme of boundless utility', with its anticipations of Meccano and Montessori. But even with Dr. Beddoes it is necessary to come back in the end to his real business in life—medicine. After leaving Oxford he began to project a Pneumatic Institution, for the curative use of gases, at Clifton Hotwells. He had already been interested in the production and use of what he elegantly calls 'Factitious Airs*'; and this interest had taken strange forms. We have seen him in his poem on Alexander speculating about the complexions of negroes. Nor did he only speculate. *At Oxford', he writes, 'in 1790, I proposed to a distressed negro to try to whiten part of his skin with oxygenated marine acid air.' He was 'to exhibit the appearance, if it should be curious, for the relief of his family. Curious as the appearance must certainly have been, it cannot have brought his family much relief, for in ten or twelve days he was once more as black as ever. But Dr. Beddoes was a persistent character; years afterwards, at Bristol, he caught another distressed negro, but with even more disappointing results. For when the creature's arm was put into the chlorine, some scratches on it smarted so violently that he hastily snatched it out again; 'and was afterwards sufficiently artful', says Dr. Stock, 'to station

himself in
the neighbourhood of the Institution, and to
appeal to
the compassion of all he met by telling them
he had been
decoyed thither, and made, without his
knowledge, the
subject of a cruel and unheard-of
experiment*. From the
point of view of charity, at all events, Dr.
Beddoes' second
attempt would seem to have been more
successful than his
first.

But he was mainly concerned with more
serious objects
than making Ethiopians change their skins;
he had great